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MORE AUSTRALIAN LEGENDARY TALES. Collected from various tribes by MRS. K. LANGLOH PARKER, author of "Australian Legendary Tales." With Introduction by ANDREW LANG. With illustrations by a native artist. London: David Nutt. 1898. Pp. xxiii, 104.

The first collection of Australian tales made by Mrs. Parker was printed in 1896. In a notice of the book given in this Journal (vol. ix. 1896, p. 303) it was observed that the gathering was gratifying as indicating that in Australia the stream of oral tradition continues to flow, and that it will be possible to obtain records much more complete than that furnished by the inadequate printed documents. This opinion is emphasized by the additional matter now communicated.

As indicated in the earlier volume, it appears that the Australian's conception of primitive life is not very different from that of the aboriginal American's. The first inhabitants of the land are supposed to have been animal ancestors, larger and wiser than animals now existing; it is further imagined that these possessed human rather than animal shape, and that the form and habits of living beasts are accounted for by the actions of these human or semi-human predecessors, from whom they have undergone metamorphosis. The characteristics of every animal are thus explained by folk-tales, which often have an important part in the social life of the tribes. Thus the Crow owes his black color to a blow from the Crane which laid him out on burnt black grass; while the Crane's hoarseness is owing to a fish-bone, which in revenge was inserted in his throat by the Crow. The Parrot's green feathers and red marks are the results of a funeral ceremony, namely, the plastering with ashes, tying on green twigs, and inflicting gashes in honor of the deceased. The dead in this case was the Mocking-bird, a lover of the Parrot sisters slain by the Lizard, a conjuror having the power of producing a mirage. In consequence of their grief the Parrots were changed into Birds, while the Mocking-bird was translated to the sky, where he is seen as the star Canopus. That kangaroos are now able to see in the dark is owing to the manner in which the eponymic Kangaroo sent forth his dream spirit to roll away the darkness, at a time when his wife, the Emu, was seeking at night for grass to mend the nyunnoo or humpy.

Phenomena of nature, in this mythology, stand precisely on the same basis as living creatures. The Wind is an invisible companion; the cold West Wind is pegged by the Crow into a hollow log, and only allowed occasional exit, a restraint by which her primitive ferocity is much subdued; however, the log is now rotting and full of holes, and some day the West Wind is likely to escape, and rush to the semi-annual corroboree, or assembly of the winds, with disastrous results. The Sun is personified under the feminine name of Yhi; but inconsistently it is said that the Sun is a fire lighted by the sky-spirit, and which burns out to embers at night. How it gets through the sky is not related; the myth is imperfect. The spirits of conjurors or wirreenuns can take the forms of whirlwinds, and destroy whatever they overtake. The Milky Way is a road travelled by

mortals, whose fires are to be seen smoking there ; the dark places are the dens of two cannibals blown into the sky by such whirlwinds, and lying in wait for travellers, who can get by safely only when they are pursuing the same game of spiritual embodiment in a cyclone.

In the earlier volume, Mrs. Parker had something to say about Byamee, who had formerly lived on earth as a man, but had departed to the spirit-land, and was honored in a bora or initiation ceremony. In this continuation we learn more about Byamee, a sort of Balder. The flowers followed him to his celestial camp ; this is above Oobi Oobi, a high mountain, with a fountain and circles of stones at top, whither resort conjurers to procure rain. The earth being left desolate, the wirreenuns (presumably in the spirit) resorted to Oobi Oobi, and there petitioned the spirit messenger of Byamee ; the latter procured their ascension to Bullimah, the heavenly paradise, where the flowers never faded, and whence they brought back blossoms which they scattered over earth.

A remarkable story of the Gray Owl gives an account of mortuary ceremonies. The body being put in the bark coffin, placed in the grave with weapons and food for the journey to Oobi Oobi, dirges are sung, somewhat as follows, says the collector :—

We shall follow the bee to its nest in the goolabah;  
 We shall follow it to its nest in the babbil-tree.  
 Honey too shall we find in the goori-tree,  
 But Eerin the light sleeper will follow with us no longer.

Wailing, mutilation on the part of the mourners, and smoking with ashes of the rosewood-tree to keep off malignant spirits follows, and then a remarkable rite, best given in the words of the author : “ After the women left, all the men stood round the grave, the oldest wirreenun at the head, which faced the east. The men bowed their heads as if at a first Boorah, the wirreenun lifted his, and, looking towards where Bullimah was supposed to be, said : ‘ Byamee, let in the spirit of Eerin to Bullimah. Save him, we ask thee, from the Eleanbah wundah, abode of the wicked. Let him into Bullimah, there to roam as he wills, for Eerin was great on earth and faithful ever to your laws. Hear, then, our cry, O Byamee, and let Eerin enter the land of beauty, of plenty, of rest. For Eerin was faithful on earth, faithful to the laws you left us.’ ” Then follows a ceremony to detect the person who caused the death, whose clan is indicated by the nature of the animal track observed on the swept ground round the grave.

This somewhat astonishing account, which provides the Australian savagery, commonly supposed to stand at the foot of the human scale, with a paradise, a hell, prayer for the dead, an ascended protector who closely corresponds to the second person of the Christian Trinity, and abstract ideas of right and wrong as affecting future destiny, naturally causes inquiry as to the manner in which Mrs. Parker obtained her information. The result is anything but satisfactory. According to her own account, the tales are composites, made up of scraps of information obtained from various tribes of New South Wales and Queensland, but by her freely amalgamated,

paraphrased, and provided with the proper names of one single tribe, the Noongahburrah. By such a process, allowing for the imperfect understanding of the language and freedom of rendering, anything might be made out. The critic is therefore quite justified in skepticism. At the same time, it is none the less clear that at the basis there is an intellectual treasure of no small worth, and we are told that, of this, part is in song. The moral therefore is, that Australian scholars ought not to lose a day in taking the only steps by which any certainty can be obtained ; that is to say, raising money, and employing educated young men of character and discretion, who may study the native languages, procure initiation in their rites, and give the world a complete and unvarnished history of the mental stock belonging to separate tribes. Whoever undertakes this task must, first of all, discard the heresy, repeatedly denounced in this Journal, "of the contempt visited on folk-tales, as if these were less important to record than ceremonies and gestures. The plain truth is, that custom, ritual, art, and archæology, without folk-lore, is a body without a soul."

In his Introduction Mr. Lang, who has previously given countenance to this error, further helps to disseminate it by citing his own assertion that religion and mythology represent quite different moods of men. This may be so far true that the savage, in his hours of amusement, may indulge in tale-telling when the stories represent no serious belief. But it is equally true that the same savage always and everywhere is furnished with a body of legendary tales, which stand to him in a sacred relation. It is by these histories that are determined his ritual, his worship, and his social life. Any attempt to give an account of his religion which neglects this element leaves out the most important part, and can result in nothing but confusion.

*W. W. Newell.*

TALES OF THE ENCHANTED ISLANDS OF THE ATLANTIC. By THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON. New York : The Macmillan Co. 1899. Pp. xii, 259.

It has been from very ancient times a habit of mythologies to place wonders of nature in outlying islands, supposed to be inhabited by spirits, demons, giants, and monsters. This method of representation supposes the abode of man to be itself a central island in a middle-earth surrounded by the water-washed homes of supernatural beings. It is not clear what influences first produced such a conception ; elementary geographical ideas were wrought into this form, as is seen in the Homeric poems, where insular paradises and gardens of enchantment are already familiar to the authors. Irish narrators, moved no doubt by the outlying position of their isle, and under the impulse of the classical notions, developed stories of navigators into marvellous accounts called *imrána*, forming sometimes frankly extravagant fiction. Of these we have an example in the celebrated voyage of St. Brandan, not older than the twelfth century in its extant form. These Irish productions had considerable currency through Europe, and